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ABSTRACT

This report addresses the problem of special education personnel attrition in Kansas, focusing on those personnel employed in Kansas during the 1991-92 year who did not return for the 1992-93 year. Part 1 provides 12 tables which show: attrition rates from 1977 through 1992; special education personnel attrition by category (focus year); total special education attrition by category (1976-1992); special education attrition by level of instruction (focus year); special education attrition by school district size (focus year); attrition for urban versus rural areas (focus year); attrition by type of administrative plan (focus year); attrition by geographic region of the state (focus year); attrition by type of service delivery model (focus year); attrition of teaching personnel specifically (focus year); attrition of support personnel specifically (focus year); and attrition for personnel from interrelated classrooms (1977-1992). Part 2 presents results of a survey returned by 102 (of 200) special education leavers. The top five reported reasons for leaving were: (1) paperwork and record keeping; (2) opportunity for professional advancement; (3) emotional exhaustion from the demands of the position; (4) look of support from special education administration; and (5) family reasons. Four additional tables provide detail on the characteristics and responses of survey recipients. The questionnaire is appended, as are written responses on surveys included, and a map of Kansas geographic regions. (DB)

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SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL ATTRITION IN KANSAS

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Special Education Personnel Attrition in Kansas

Prepared by

Paul McKnab, Ed.D.
Division of Psychology and Special Education
Jones Institute for Educational Excellence
The Teachers College
Emporia State University

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Part 1: Tables of Attrition Data 4

Part 2: Results of the Questionnaire 20

Appendix A. Special Education Personnel Questionnaire 35

Appendix B. Written Responses Included on the Surveys 39

Appendix C. State of Kansas Geographic Regions . 46

References 47

Tables

Table 1. Special education attrition rates: 1977-1992. 6

Table 2. Special education personnel attrition by category: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 7

Table 3. Total special education attrition by category: 1976-1992. 9

Table 4. Special education attrition by level of instruction: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 10

Table 5. Special education attrition for large districts, medium districts, and small districts: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 11

Table 6. Special education attrition for urban districts and rural districts: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 13

Table 7. Special education attrition by type of administrative plan: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 14

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 8. Special education attrition by geographic region of the state: 1991-92 to 1992-93. . . 14

Table 9. Special education attrition by type of service delivery model: 1991-92 to 1992-93. . . 15

Table 10. Special education attrition for teaching personnel: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 17

Table 11. Special education attrition for support personnel: 1991-92 to 1992-93. 18

Table 12. Special education attrition for personnel from interrelated classrooms: 1977-1992. 19

Table 13. Certification, gender, age, and educational levels of respondents. 26

Table 14. Primary occupation or activity in 1992-93 for leavers from 1991-92 special education positions. 27

Table 15. Frequency of personnel who left special education in Kansas but who remained in the education of school age students. 28

Table 16. Rankings of the influences for leaving special education positions 31

Special Education Personnel Attrition in Kansas

Introduction

Since the late 1970s, with the passage of federal and state mandates requiring that special education services be provided to all exceptional students, there has been a serious scarcity of special education personnel in the nation (Boe, Bobbitt, & Cook, 1993) and the State of Kansas (McKnab, 1983; McKnab, 1990). Appropriate special education programs cannot be provided to exceptional individuals when there are shortages of qualified personnel. Teacher attrition is generally recognized as the predominant reason for shortages in educational personnel (Boe, et al., 1993). Therefore, it is worthwhile for administrators, legislators, and other policy makers to comprehend the teacher attrition issue if a qualified, permanent teaching force of special education personnel is ever expected to be developed.

This report is one of a series that has been written since 1983. The impetus for the first report came in 1980, when Senator Joseph Harder, long-time chair of the State Senate Education Committee, convened a panel of educators to determine solutions for the critical

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shortages in special education personnel in Kansas. At that time, there was no accurate data on personnel shortages, teacher attrition, or reasons why teachers were leaving special education. To attempt to answer some of these issues, procedures were developed to accurately measure teacher attrition and to determine reasons why teachers were exiting the field (McKnab, 1983). That first report found an attrition rate of 15.2 percent, while the two most recent reports (McKnab 1990; McKnab, 1992) have found attrition rates of 7.7 and 9.2 percent.

The attrition of special education personnel continues to be a topic of concern for the State of Kansas and the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE). The KSBE has the responsibility to determine if sufficient numbers of qualified personnel are available, to identify training needs, and through the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development state committee (CSPD), "to maximize the use of Kansas resources for preparing instructional and support personnel to serve students with disabilities..." (Kansas State Plan for Special Education: Fiscal Years 1994-96, KSBE, April 12, 1993, Topeka). As part of the process for gathering sufficient

data to address the personnel needs in special education, the KSBE collects and disseminates information to various constituencies.

This report addresses attrition for two base years: those employed in the 1991-92 year who did not return for the 1992-93 year. Throughout the report, the three descriptive terms of leavers, movers, and stayers, are used. They have been adopted from the work of Bobbitt (1991), but applied in a context which fits the special education employment situation in Kansas. A leaver is an individual who was employed in special education in 1991-92, but who did not return in Kansas, in special education, for the 1992-93 school year. A mover is an individual who stayed in special education in Kansas, but who switched cooperatives or interlocals. A stayer would be an individual who remained in special education with the same employer for both of the two base years.

This report is an expanded version of the previous ones, and consists of two parts. As in the past, the first part provides tables which present the attrition data for special education personnel who were leavers. The second part of the report is an analysis of surveys

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which were distributed to personnel who changed positions, both leavers and movers. A survey was sent to 200 personnel who were leavers, those who did not return to special education anywhere in the state of Kansas. The results of the survey provides some characteristics of the leavers and movers and suggest reasons why they left their 1991-92 positions.

Part 1: Tables of Attrition Data

The 12 tables present the numbers of Kansas special education personnel employed during the 1991-92 school year who did not return for the 1992-93 school year. The tables were developed using computerized data provided by the KSBE. By comparing social security numbers on data tapes for the two base years, personnel were identified who were employed any time during the 1991-92 year who did not return at the start of the 1992-93 school year to the state to be employed in a special education position. The data tapes are primarily maintained by the KSBE to make financial reimbursements to school districts for each teacher, and they are believed to be highly accurate.

Table 1 is a summary table which displays attrition rates on an annual basis from 1977 through 1992. When school started in 1993, 495 of the 5507 personnel who had been employed the previous year did not return to special education employment in Kansas. The 1993 attrition rate of 9.0 per cent was in approximately the same range as 1988 to 1992, and significantly less than the double digit rates from 1977 through 1987. Table 1 is also based on all special education personnel including all categories of teachers and support personnel. In some of the literature, only rates for teachers are presented, so some care is needed in comparing this data with other studies. Tables 10 and 11 do provide separated attrition data for teachers (Table 10) and support personnel (Table 11).

Table 2 presents the attrition data by special education category, in decreasing order of attrition. The categories with the highest attrition rates are obviously based on very small samples. Table 2 includes Kansas' term "interrelated" to describe teachers who have been assigned students from more than one of the traditional categories. In Table 2, the data for the six separate interrelated categories are presented in the

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body of the table. Refer to Table 12 for a summary of interrelated teacher employment and attrition for the years from 1977 through 1992.

Table 1. Special education attrition rates: 1977-1992.

Year	Employed	Leavers	Percent Leavers
1976-77	2460	373	15.2
1977-78	2894	479	16.6
1978-79	3272	573	17.5
1979-80	3551	573	16.1
1980-81	3955	601	15.2
1981-82	4110	458	11.1
1982-83	4329	545	12.6
1983-84	4400	649	14.7
1984-85	4533	681	15.0
1985-86	4660	495	10.6
1986-87	4798	561	11.7
1987-88	4774	468	9.8
1988-89	4977	485	9.7
1989-90	5223	402	7.7
1990-91	5469	504	9.2
1991-92	5507	495	9.0
TOTAL	68912	8342	12.1

Interpretation: During the 1991-92 school year 5507 personnel were employed in special education; 495 did not return in special education for the 1992-93 school year, for a rate of 9.0%.

Table 2. Special education personnel attrition by category: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Category	1991-92 Employed	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Recreation Therapy	1	1	100
Homebound	8	3	38
Music Therapy	19	5	26
Physical Therapy	84	19	23
SEIMC (Material Centers)	33	6	18
Nurse	139	24	17
Physically Impaired	12	2	17
Adapted PE	47	6	13
Occupational Therapy	109	13	12
Behavior Disorders	481	53	11
Educable MR	261	28	11
Social Work	200	21	11
Hearing Impaired	77	8	10
Special Needs	49	5	10
Interrelated EMR/TMR	72	7	10
Gifted	436	42	10
Counselors	43	4	9
Special Ed. Administration	110	10	9
Interrelated Other	136	12	9
Work Study	34	3	9
Learning Disabled	762	67	9
Speech/Language	551	47	9
Interrelated LD/BD	177	15	8
Severe/Multiple Handicapped	82	6	7
Early Childhood Handicapped	259	18	7
Interrelated LD/EMR	242	16	7
Interrelated EMR/LD/BD	397	24	6
School Psychology	393	22	6
Interrelated TMR/SMH	42	2	5
Audiology	23	1	4
Trainable MR	114	4	4
Visually Impaired	34	1	3
Art Therapy	2	0	0
Work Study	56	0	0
Supervisor	18	0	0
Diagnostic Teacher	4	0	0
Total	5507	495	9

Interpretation: For the 1 recreation therapist employed, 1 did not return, for an attrition rate of 100%.

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Table 3 summarizes the employment and attrition data for all categories for the years from 1977 through 1992. The categories are arranged in decreasing order of attrition. For example, for the category of learning disabled, there has been a total of 12,811 teachers employed, with 1,415 total leavers, for an attrition rate of 11.0 per cent. The overall attrition rate for all categories is 12.1 per cent. As in Table 2, the highest rates are based on very small numbers. In addition, over the years, the KSBE has combined or changed the names of some of the categories. Therefore, some of the categories that appear in Table 3, a summary table for all years, are not found in other tables which are just for the more recent years.

For the remaining tables, Table 4 to Table 12, comments are provided only to help in clarification or interpretation. The tables are straight forward enough so that the reader can draw his/her own conclusions.

Table 5 contains the data organized by the size of school districts. The three sizes, 100 personnel and above, 11 to 99, and 10 and below were arbitrarily selected. It should be noted that for the 47 small

districts, most also belonged to either a cooperative or interlocal. They were listed separately on the data tape because they independently were employing one or two additional personnel to supplement the number of personnel they were being assigned from the cooperative or interlocal.

Table 3. Total special education attrition by category: 1976-1992.

Category	1977-92 Employed	1977-92 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Recreation Therapy	4	2	50.0
Dance/Movement Therapy	3	1	33.0
Other	698	173	24.8
Counselors	348	61	17.5
Physical Therapy	716	119	16.6
Interrelated	3338	528	15.8
Art Therapy	19	3	15.8
Homebound	342	53	15.5
Severe/Multiple Handicapped	1422	211	14.8
Behavior Disorders	6529	955	14.6
Occupational Therapy	922	134	14.5
Special Needs	336	48	14.3
Adapted PE	396	56	14.1
Hearing Impaired	1069	149	13.9
Educable MR	6611	887	13.4
Music Therapy	114	15	13.2
Trainable MR	2296	302	13.2
Audiology	253	31	12.3
SEIMC (Material Centers)	433	53	12.2
Nurse	1102	133	12.1
Gifted	5349	632	11.8
Learning Disabled	12811	1482	11.6
Speech/Language	7070	817	11.6
Interrelated TMR/SMH	180	20	11.1
Early Childhood Handicapped	1448	160	11.0
Social Work	1840	191	10.4
Interrelated Other	392	39	9.9
Visually Impaired	450	41	9.1
School Psychology	5246	467	8.9
Interrelated EMR/TMR	340	30	8.8
Interrelated LD/EMR/BD	2095	182	8.7
Interrelated LD/EMR	1569	132	8.4
Special Ed. Administration	1487	124	8.3
Work Study	193	16	8.3
Interrelated LD/BD	818	64	7.8
Physically Impaired	252	16	6.3
Supervisor	303	13	4.3
Diagnostic Teacher	114	2	1.8
TOTAL	68,908	8,342	12.1

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Table 4. Special education attrition by level of instruction: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Level of Instruction	Spec. Ed. Personnel Employed 1991-92	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Preschool	292	20	7
Primary	456	44	10
Intermediate	123	8	7
Junior High	362	42	12
Senior High	529	42	8
Postsecondary	1	0	0
Preschool/Primary	13	2	15
Primary/Intermediate	1212	104	9
Intermediate/Junior High	344	36	10
Junior High/Senior High	462	36	8
All Levels (EC - 12)	505	54	11
All Levels (K - 12)	1208	107	9
Totals	5507	495	9

Table 5. Special education attrition for large districts, medium districts, and small districts: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

	Number of Districts	Personnel Employed 1991-92	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Large Districts	9	2380	211	8.9
Medium Districts	64	2987	260	8.7
Small Districts	47	140	24	17.1
Total	120	5507	495	9.0

Definitions: A large district was defined as having 100 or more special education personnel.

A medium district has 11 to 99 special education personnel.

A small district has 10 or less personnel.

Table 6 compares the attrition rates for urban versus rural districts. An urban district was operationally defined as any district located primarily in one of four counties: Sedgwick, Shawnee, Johnson, or Wyandotte. This included 25 school districts. The remaining 279 school districts in the other 101 counties were operationally defined as rural districts. In the report from last

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year, the rural attrition rate was 2.4 % higher than the urban rate. This year, the urban rate is .6 % higher than the rural rate.

Table 7 presents the data arranged by the type of administrative organizational plan of the district. Single district refers to those school districts that provide all or most of their special education needs with their own personnel. If they do use the cooperative services of another district, it is usually on the basis of an individual contract for a student. Single districts would include those such as Wichita, Shawnee Mission, Eureka, and Fort Scott. Cooperatives and Interlocals are both used to describe groups of school districts that band together to provide services. An essential difference between the two is how they are governed. A cooperative is governed by one of the sponsoring districts. An interlocal establishes its own governing board and functions independently, except it cannot levy direct property taxes. There are a few personnel who do not fit conveniently in one of the groups; they are included in the "other" category.

Table 8 reports attrition by geographic region of the state. The regions are identical to those used by Skillett (1993). A map of the state is provided in Appendix C to locate the regions. This year, the pattern was interesting to interpret. The lowest rate was in area 1, a rural area in the northwest part of the state. The highest rate was in area 2, a rural area in the southwest part of the state. After looking at the data for those two areas, and the other seven, no reasonable hypothesis could be suggested to explain the differences in attrition rates for the nine geographic regions.

Table 6. Special education attrition for urban districts and rural districts: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

District Location	Personnel Employed 1991-92	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Urban	2508	233	9.3
Rural	2999	262	8.7
Total	5507	495	9.0

Table 7. Special education attrition by type of administrative plan: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Administrative Plan	Personnel Employed 1992-93	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Interlocal	1054	83	7.8
Cooperative	2265	161	7.1
Single district	2058	199	9.6
Other	124	22	17.7
Total	5507	495	9.0

Table 8. Special education attrition by geographic region of the state: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Geographic Region	Personnel Employed 1991-92	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
1	272	19	6.9
2	373	40	10.7
3	366	27	7.3
4	701	62	8.8
5	842	83	9.8
6	458	46	10.0
7	1187	99	8.3
8	857	87	10.1
9	451	32	7.0
Total	5507	495	9.0

Table 9 reports the attrition data by service delivery model. As in the past, the three delivery models with the most personnel (itinerant, resource, and self-contained) were at approximately the same attrition rates. It is known that some personnel who are working on temporary assignments involving grants and research projects have in the past been assigned by districts to the consultant category. Perhaps this explains the higher attrition rates to some extent, although there is no firm data to support this conclusion at the current time.

Table 9. Special education attrition by type of service delivery model: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Service Delivery Model	Personnel Employed 1991-92	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Consultant	380	45	11.8
Itinerant	1903	175	9.2
Resource	1765	144	8.2
Self-contained	1298	118	9.1
Not Indicated	161	13	8.1
Total	5507	495	9.0

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Tables 10 and 11 contain the same data found in Table 2, but the data have been separated to provide attrition rates for those personnel who have teaching as a primary responsibility, (Table 10) and those who are mainly support personnel (Table 11). Probably because of the history of how Kansas has reimbursed for special education personnel, we tend to think of all of our personnel as teachers. However, in much of the rest of the country, such as Iowa and Nebraska, support personnel are often employed through other agencies.

The data for the two tables indicate that while the attrition rate for support personnel is higher than that for teaching personnel, the difference is not great, and they are both below ten percent.

Table 10. Special education attrition for teaching personnel: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Category	Personnel Employed 1992-93	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Homebound	8	3	38
Physically Impaired	12	2	17
Adapted PE	47	6	13
Behavior Disorders	481	53	11
Educable MR	261	28	11
Hearing Impaired	77	8	10
Interrelated OTHER	49	5	10
Interrelated LD/EMR/BD	72	7	10
Gifted	436	42	10
Interrelated TMR/SMH	136	12	9
Learning Disabled	762	67	9
Interrelated LD/EMR	177	15	8
Severe/Multiple Handicapped	82	6	7
Early Childhood Handicapped	259	18	7
Interrelated LD/BD	397	24	6
Interrelated EMR/TMR	42	2	5
Trainable MR	114	4	4
Visually Impaired	34	1	3
Special Needs	2	0	0
Work Study	56	0	0
Diagnostic Teacher	4	0	0
Total	3508	303	8.6

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Table 11. Special education attrition for support personnel: 1991-92 to 1992-93.

Category	Personnel Employed 1991-92	1992-93 Leavers	Percent Leavers
Music Therapy	1	1	100
Dance/Movement Therapy	19	5	26
Occupational Therapy	84	19	23
SEIMC (Material Centers)	33	6	18
Nurse	169	24	17
Counselors	109	13	12
Social Work	200	21	11
Other	43	4	9
Special Ed. Administration	110	10	9
Recreation Therapy	34	3	9
Speech/Language	551	47	9
Physical Therapy	242	16	7
School Psychology	393	22	6
Audiology	23	1	4
Supervisor	18	0	0
Art Therapy	0	0	0
Total	1999	192	9.6

Table 12 presents the attrition data for interrelated personnel. Kansas uses the term interrelated as other states would use "cross-categorical." Since 1977, the numbers of personnel assigned to the interrelated category have continued to increase. In the initial years, the attrition rates were higher, paralleling the overall attrition rates. During the past few years,

attrition rates for interrelated classes have been at or below the overall attrition rate for all categories.

Table 12. Special education attrition for personnel from interrelated classrooms: 1977-1992.

Year	Personnel Employed	Leavers	Percent Leavers
1977	132	22	16.7
1978	192	35	18.2
1979	245	56	22.9
1980	317	52	16.4
1981	389	59	15.2
1982	461	59	12.8
1983	497	72	14.5
1984	513	95	18.5
1985	592	78	13.2
1986	606	73	12.0
1987	622	64	10.3
1988	654	51	7.8
1989	746	72	9.7
1990	799	55	6.9
1991	901	76	8.4
1992	1066	76	7.1

Part 1 Summary

For the 1992-93 school year, 495 of 5507 special education personnel employed in Kansas in 1991-92 did not return, for an attrition rate of 9.0 percent. It was the fifth consecutive year that attrition was under 10 percent. The four categories that employ the largest numbers of personnel had the following attrition rates: behavior disorders, 11%; gifted, 10%; learning disabled, 9%; and speech/language, 9%. Teaching personnel had a slightly smaller attrition rate (8.6%) than did support personnel (9.6%). Single districts that operate their own special education programs had a higher attrition rate (9.6%) than did cooperatives (7.1%) or interlocals (7.8%).

Part 2: Results of the Questionnaire

The second part of the study addressed the reasons why personnel did not return to their 1991-92 professional positions. A questionnaire was developed and sent to a random sample of those who did not return. The questionnaire was based on a similar one used in 1982 (McKnab) and modified according to information found in the research of Bobbitt, Faupel, and Burns (1991) and Billingsley and Cross (1991). The questionnaire asked for demographic information, ratings on 31 possible

reasons for leaving the field, and provided one page for written comments. A copy is provided in Appendix A.

A random sample of 200 (40%) persons was selected from the total of 495 personnel who did not return. Individual envelopes were prepared which contained a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a stamped, return envelope. Because the KSBE, for reasons of confidentiality, had supplied only social security numbers, the names and addresses of the members of the sample were not known. Therefore the envelopes were packaged together and mailed to the previous year's employer, together with a list of social security numbers and the category to which each person had been assigned. The previous employer was requested to address and mail the envelopes. They were mailed to the employers in December and early January of 1993 because that is the time of year when districts need accurate addresses to send W-2 forms to their employees. The random sample size of 200 was primarily chosen so that the number of envelopes needed to be addressed by the largest district would appear to them to be a manageable number. The state's largest district had 28 envelopes, and the next largest had 22. Of the 59 districts that

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received envelopes, 51 districts had four or less envelopes to address. It is not known if every district addressed and mailed the envelopes sent to them. Because of the method used to address the envelopes, there did not appear to be a feasible way to do a follow-up mailing to encourage additional responses.

From the 200 questionnaires that were sent, 102 were completed and returned (51 %). The Postal Service returned nine more (4.5 %) because of insufficient addresses. In addition, school districts returned seven (3.5 %) for the following reasons:

a. One individual was deceased.

b. Two individuals had not properly completed their certification for the 1992-93 school year. They had been rejected by the state for reimbursement and dropped from the reimbursement tape in the early fall. However, by December, the certification problems had been solved. Because they had not left employment, the employer did not mail questionnaires to these individuals.

c. One district indicated that three social workers had been removed from the list of

personnel submitted for reimbursement, but that they were still employed as social workers, paid from other funds.

d. One district indicated that one nurse had been under contract from the county health department, but that year the health department had assigned a different nurse to do the job. The district did not send the form to the previous nurse.

In summary, of the 200 questionnaires, sent to the districts to be addressed and mailed, 102, or 51 % were returned. In addition, employers returned seven for various reasons, but with enough explanation to know what those personnel were doing for the 1992-93 school year. However, these results were not included in any further analysis.

Demographic Information

The initial section of the questionnaire gathered demographic data, which is summarized in Table 13. For the level of certification question, the high number of no responses is probably due to the fact that many of the related services personnel do not consider

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themselves educational personnel and perhaps do not realize that they all do technically have certificates. Of those who did respond, the vast majority were fully certified. The respondents were predominantly female, as is true of all studies of teacher attrition. Almost half were in the age range of 31 to 40, with almost two-thirds possessing the master's degree.

Current Positions of 1991-92 Leavers

The respondents were asked to briefly describe what they were doing for the 1992-93 year. Their answers were coded, summarized in Table 14, separated into two groups by whether they were teaching personnel or support personnel. (See Table 10 and Table 11 for a list of teaching and support personnel categories.) In examining the differences in their responses, two items deserve comment. For those who provided support services, nine of the 30 (30%) indicated that they were employed outside of education, but in the same related profession. Six individuals were in private speech therapy, two in physical therapy, and one in occupational therapy. Obviously, these are professionals who are in high need in the private sector, and with differences in salary and working conditions, they

decided to change employment settings. Similarly, for those who had been teaching personnel, 22 of the 72 (31 %) indicated that they had transferred to teach in general education. These two examples illustrate the difficulties in attrition research. At what point can it be said that a person has left the field? Attrition for this report has been defined as having been employed in special education in the state one year, but not employed in special education in the state the next year. The six speech therapists and the 22 teaching personnel would be considered leavers. However, other researchers using different definitions of attrition would not count them as examples of attrition.

Table 15, which consists of five lines taken from Table 14, shows that of the 102 respondents to the 200 questionnaires distributed, 43 of them are still employed in the education of school age children. Interpretation of this data is complicated by the usual limitations of random samples, the minimal return of 51%, and the probable biased sample of those motivated to complete and return the questionnaire. For the definition of attrition used in this study the frequency was 495 out of 5507 for a rate of 9.0%. However, if one

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were to speculate concerning the actual numbers of personnel from this study who have totally left the profession for which they were trained, the number would be far smaller.

Table 13. Certification, gender, age, and educational levels of respondents.

	Frequency	Percent
Level of Certification		
Full	53	52
Provisional	9	9
No response	40	39
Gender		
Female	86	84
Male	12	12
No response	4	4
Age Category		
21-30	13	13
31-40	44	43
41-50	19	19
51-60	13	13
61+	9	9
No response	4	4
Highest level of education		
Bachelor's	21	21
Master's	64	63
Specialist	4	4
Doctorate	6	6
No Response	7	7

Table 14. Primary occupation or activity in 1992-93 for leavers from 1991-92 special education positions.

	Teaching Personnel	Service Personnel	Total
Attending college	2	2	4
Regular education administration in Kansas	1	0	1
Special education administration in another state	1	0	1
Higher education (special education)	2	2	4
Regular education in Kansas	22	6	28
Regular education in another state	3	1	4
Special education in another state	7	2	9
Career outside of education in Kansas	7	1	8
Career outside of education in Kansas, but in a related field	2	9	11
State Institution, special education	1	0	1
Unemployed	5	3	8
Illness	1	0	1
Motherhood	10	2	12
Retired	7	0	7
No Response	1	1	2
Total	72	30	102

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Table 15. Frequency of personnel who left special education in Kansas but who remained in the education of school age students.

	Teaching Personnel	Service Personnel	Total
Regular education administrator in Kansas	1	0	1
Special education administrator in another state	1	0	1
Regular education in Kansas	22	6	28
Regular education in another state	3	1	4
Special education in another state	7	2	9
Total	34	9	43

Reasons for Leaving

The second section of the questionnaire asked the individuals to rate the 31 items as to the extent that item represented an influence for them to leave the position that they had held during the 1991-92 school year. The scale ranged from 5 (strong influence to leave) to 1 (no influence to leave). In addition, a not

applicable choice was available. They could circle an unlimited number of the 31 items. Table 16 has a listing of the number of times each item received a ranking of 5 or 4, summarizing those items which had the most influence on teachers to leave. The sum of 5 and 4 ratings is indicated after each item. In comparing these results with earlier studies in Kansas (McKnab, 1983, McKnab, 1990) and studies from other sections of the nation (Billingsley & Cross, 1991), there is considerable agreement among the rank orders for reasons for leaving.

Written responses

The respondents were encouraged to add written responses to their questionnaires. Many took advantage of the opportunity, some writing several hundred words. Some are very positive, but the majority of the responses had some critical comments. There was some editing to remove personally identifying information, irrelevant comments, and redundancies. Abbreviations, syntax, and grammatical problems with style were not edited. The responses are included (see Appendix B) because of the depth that they provide to trying to interpret why special education personnel quit.

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Part 2 Summary

To study why the 495 personnel did not return to their 1991-92 positions, 200 questionnaires were distributed, of which 102 were returned for a 51% return rate. Eighty-four percent were women, 63% had earned a master's degree, 44% came from the age category of 31 to 40. Of the 102 respondents, 43 (42%) were still employed in the education of school aged students, with 32 of the 43 employed in regular education. For those who did not return to teaching or a related field, the three highest activities for 1992-93 were motherhood, 12, (12%); unemployed 8, (8%); and in a career outside of education 8, (8%). The top five reasons for leaving were: 1) paperwork and record keeping, 2) opportunity for professional advancement, 3) emotional exhaustion from the demands of the position, 4) lack of support from special education administration, and 5) family reasons.

Table 16. Rankings of the influences for leaving special education positions

Influence	Frequency
Paper work and record keeping	33
Opportunity for professional advancement	28
Emotional exhaustion from the demands of the position	26
Lack of support from special education administration	25
Family reasons	24
Lack of support from regular education administration	21
The number of meetings and conferences	20
Too many duties other than teaching	18
Salary	16
Class size (too many students)	15
Student discipline and behavior	13
Care for children (not newborn)	12
Spouse transferred	11
Poor facilities	11
Lack of intellectual stimulation	11
Discouraged because of a lack of student progress	10
Lack of support from your professional colleagues	9
Lack of materials and equipment	9
Amount of driving required	9
Health reasons (not maternity)	8
Inadequate fringe benefits	8
Too much time grading papers and/or preparing lessons	8
Assigned students outside of your area of preparation	8
Maternity leave, care for newborn	6
Marriage	5
District size	5
Isolation of the district	5
Lack of special education support services (OT, PT, etc.)	3
Insufficient skills taught in your college training	3
Lack of cultural and social activities	2
Divorce	1

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Policy Implications

For the fifth consecutive year, the special education attrition rate for Kansas was below ten percent. This consistent, single-digit rate is one positive indicator that a sufficient supply of special education personnel is becoming available. Kansas is not alone. While all parts of the county experienced personnel supply problems in the past, some states are now reporting few shortages, and there are surpluses in certain areas of the country. However, there are still localities where personnel shortages continue to exist.

Because the supply problem is becoming isolated, the issue will best be studied by examining local data, not state and national statistics. The Kansas districts with the greatest difficulties in obtaining and keeping an adequate supply of special education personnel should be studied to identify why the staffing problems exist. When policy decisions are made to solve the problems, it is important to account for the multiple causes and effects of shortages of personnel. When many forces contribute to a problem, there is a need for higher education, state and local agencies, parents, communities, and combinations of general education,

special education, and related services to work together (Smith-Davis and Billingsley, 1993).

There are no easy solutions when a dilemma has many causes. The supply of special education personnel is related to variables such as "competition from other fields and settings, the depopularization of teaching careers, the relativity of salary levels, demands for allied health professionals in new and expanding areas of medicine and rehabilitation, changing demographics, population trends, enrollment patterns and costs in higher education, changing delivery systems, fiscal downturns, and limited understanding of the exact nature of personnel shortages (Smith-Davis & Billingsley, 1993, p. 208)." Furthermore, education trends adopted at the same time can precipitate opposing outcomes. For example, the movement to have greater inclusion of students with disabilities in the regular classes could cause fewer children to be referred to special education, resulting in a decrease in the need for special education personnel. At the same time, there has been a movement for the increase in educational standards, which will probably result in more students needing assistance to achieve at the new higher levels.

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Additionally, new challenges will continue to emerge, further complicating the solution to personnel shortages. Smith-Davis and Billingsley (1993) predicted that an emerging personnel issue will be to obtain a more adequate representation of all ethnic, racial, and cultural groups in hiring new personnel.

Appendix A

SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. In the box write the special education assignment you held for the 1991-92 school year. Please be specific as to type and level. Examples: LD teacher, grades K-9; BD teacher, grades 9-12; speech clinician, grades K-12; interrelated with MR and LD, grades 5-8.

2. For your 1991-92 position, circle the level of certification that you held:

   Provisional certification Full Certification

3. Including the 1991-92 school year:
   a. How many years have you been employed as a professional in special education? _____ years.
   b. How many years have you been employed as a professional in regular education? _____ years.

4. From the following list, circle the letter in front of the statement which best describes what you are doing this year:
   a. Attending a college or university
   b Accepted a position in education in another district in Kansas
   c. Accepted a position in education in another state
   d. Accepted a career outside education
   e. Retired
   f. Other

In the box please describe specifically what you are doing this year: (Examples: regular education fifth grade teacher; middle school counselor; LD teacher, K-6; selling insurance; mother at home with my new baby.)

5. For each of the following, circle the answer that best describes you:
   a. Gender: Male Female
   b. Age last year: 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61+
   c. Your highest level of educational preparation:
      Bachelors Masters Specialist Doctorate
   d. (Optional, but very helpful to the research)
      What was the school district name or number of your employer for 1991-92? _____

On this page you are encouraged to write any comments or concerns that you have about the employment and retention of special education personnel.

Please circle the number in front of each item to indicate the extent that the item was an influence on you to leave the special education position you held during the 1991-1992 school year.

Use the following 5 to 1 scale:

Strong Influence to Leave — No Influence to Leave

5 1

Use the NA column if the item is not applicable at all.

5	4	3	2	1	NA	Maternity leave, care for new born
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Care for children (not new born)
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Health reasons (not maternity)
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Other family reasons (describe if you wish)
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Marriage
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Divorce
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Spouse transferred
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Lack of materials and equipment
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Poor facilities
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Salary
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Inadequate fringe benefits
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Lack of support from regular education administration
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Lack of support from special education administration
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Too many duties other than teaching
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Paperwork and record keeping
5	4	3	2	1	NA	The number of meetings and conferences
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Too much time grading papers and/or preparing lessons
5	4	3	2	1	NA	District size
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Isolation of the district
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Amount of driving required
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Lack of cultural or social activities
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Lack of intellectual stimulation
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Opportunity for professional advancement
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Lack of support from your professional colleagues
5	4	3	2	1	NA	Discouraged because of a lack of student progress

(Please continue on to the next page)

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5 4 3 2 1 NA Lack of special education support services (speech, OT, PT)

5 4 3 2 1 NA Assigned students outside of our area of preparation

5 4 3 2 1 NA Insufficient skills taught in your college training

5 4 3 2 1 NA Student discipline and behavior

5 4 3 2 1 NA Class size (too many students)

5 4 3 2 1 NA Emotional exhaustion from the demands of the position

Circle the number that best describes the administrative reason why you did not return to your 1991-92 position:

1. You resigned
2. You were not offered a contract because there was a reduction in force (outback)
3. You were not offered a contract for other reasons (please explain if you desire)
4. Other (please describe):

Please return questionnaire in the envelope provided to:

Dr. Paul McKnab

ESU - Box 31

Emporia State University

Emporia, KS 66801

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Appendix B

Written responses included on the surveys.

There was some editing to remove personally identifying information, irrelevant comments, and redundancies. Abbreviations, syntax, and grammatical problems with style were not edited. The responses are included because of the depth that they provide in trying to understand why special education personnel quit. The numbers in front of each response refer to the questionnaire number of the respondent.

58. Special education personnel have additional duties which are not always recognized by regular education personnel and are not cooperated. This becomes a problem of morale for special education teachers. I've never held a regular education job so I can't see things their way. It seems to me their jobs are easier, yet they're not fully trained in knowledge of how to deal with special ed kids or how to appreciate our role. They seem to know surprisingly little. Some are great, of course, but some don't know what I do or how as a special ed teacher they may know me but no my role within the school. They consistently don't know or understand any of the special ed guidelines--even after they've been explained. Some teachers persist in believing that a child who's struggling must be a special ed child. They don't appreciate how stringent the guidelines should be.

57. Took early retirement. I loved my job--there was just too much of it.

44. My main reasons for leaving: (1) There appeared to be a complete lack of support from the special education administrator. (2) Decisions regarding caseload, which should be made by the involved professionals (i.e., the speech-language pathologists) were made by the administrator. In the preschool, in order to meet the needs of the children, all SLP's in the department (as well as the other special ed. personnel on the preschool team) agreed that a full time SLP was needed. I understand that this had been posted out the years before, also. (3) The amount of paperwork was enormous. (4) No support staff was assigned to me. My experience has left me very concerned about the quality of speech-language intervention in the public schools.

40. I will say after twelve year I still enjoyed the kids and my colleagues but it was getting difficult to stay motivated. There were times when students

were placed in my room--because of problems they caused--even though they were not "true" spec. ed. students.

36. I was extremely happy in my work.

1. My problems centered around the school administrators that were supposedly over our program. They were very seldom involved or showed any interest in our "elementary" program. They were more concerned with the main body of the school, not the satellite programs. No attempts at understanding the special needs of our elementary program were made. I was over whelmed with "paper work" in my position of head teacher. The treatment process had changed over the years to a shorter length of treatment which increased admissions and discharges substantially. I was devoting more and more of after school hours to keep my head above water. I felt like the administration did not even acknowledge the work load, let alone try to look at restructuring to lessen the load. The change was good for me. I love what I am doing, and I have a home life again.

35. A great deal of the Sp. Ed. supervisors and staff time was spent on compliance visit last year, to the point that student services were not given priority. I could not understand preparing paper work to correct problems on evaluations four years prior. My major reason for changing jobs was to re-energize myself with a new job and setting.

34. I feel like one reason teachers leave is total burnout. The progress of students in Sp. Ed. is not as great and therefore it appears you are beating your head against the wall. Also, if placing Spec. Ed. students in reg. school settings you need adequate facilities. It's hard to work with students who need to be catheterized everyday, but you have no where to do it but on the floor on a mat. We need to meet the needs of the students.

33. I love my new job, I also loved teaching Sp. Ed., but it was too dead end with the BD and I import more now and even know a lot of wonderful kids I never knew before. BD was too limiting in scope.

50. Retirement was the natural conclusion of my formal teaching career. I have always been treated well and felt my job environment was average or better.

52. There are a lot of very unhappy special education (LD) teachers because BD students are being put into their classrooms. This situation hurts the LD and BD children. It's unfair to put a special needs (BD) child in a room with a teacher that has little or no training.

53. The laws concerning the numbers of students for each Sp. Ed. teachers should be enforced. There was no one to assist me in my first year, and there were few teaching materials.

32. Personally I fully enjoyed teaching special education and will return to the field when my children are in school.

28. I enjoyed my job in Special Education, however, due to the low salary and poor benefits I always was forced to work a second job. I was forced to eventually seek a job in a hospital where my salary was doubled and case load was significantly decreased. Also this was a change from an itinerant position to no travel at all. This job will pay 100% of medical insurance and recumbencies for graduated classes or CEU's.

27. I taught SMH for eleven years. I left this group because of burn out due to a lack of student progress.

26. I felt the time and effort I had to put into "sorting and selecting" students was a waste of time. Why couldn't we just work to better the system for all students. State regulations were counterproductive to the education process. If classrooms were interesting and stimulating and student centered we wouldn't need all the bandaids--special programs for the and that. I think the system created the need.

24. The reasons I chose to leave my position: (1) Lack of administrative support within the school (i.e., a principal who was always gone; vice-principals who were inconsistent with discipline. Students were becoming increasingly out of control. (2) Poor morale among staff. (3) Continuous changes made in the LD program by supervisors. The positive thing was that within my school, the sp. ed. staff were extremely supportive of each other--much more than among the reg. ed. staff.

25. I believe the job is what you bring to it and make of it yourself. It requires previous regular education, common sense, thinking and problem

solving skills. I heard lots of complaints about most of the things listed but I had very few problems. Of course, I didn't always enjoy the paperwork.

23. I am very concerned about this inclusion focus. We have always mainstreamed our MR students in every class they were capable of being successful in. We have worked twenty years to get our programs for work and acceptance for our students and they get better every year. Putting all these kids in classes where they will be the "oddball" and subject to cruel remarks is ridiculous. Just notice how cruel "regular" students are to each other.

21. I think it would be good to have a plan for time-share on half time positions to allow flexibility in the profession. There is a huge turnover largely because of the stress overload, and more paperwork in the Sp. Ed. areas. It's certainly not for everyone, but the option may keep some with it longer.

20. Burnout rate in Sp. Ed. is high for a variety of reasons. Paper work is extensive, long hours developing I.E.P.'s, conducting home visits, grading papers, and too, few signs of success. More regression among students than advancement is seen . Never techniques are often shunned by administration, older colleagues, or boards. In general, teachers often feel they are considered less important than administration most teachers want to make a difference and love children but in reality, want a life of their own, too! Much of the wonderful ideas brought forth at universities is squashed in the school board bureaucracy which awards sports and shuns teachers as those who can't.

16. A Board with little commitment to Spec. Ed. Superintendents wanting excellence but not willing to pay for the services. Staff

felt like they always got the shaft and were step-children. Sp. Ed. is too "trendy"--let's go with this now from one extreme to another such as full inclusion--which is not for everyone or to everyone's benefit. Legislative inconsistent funding. Sp. Ed. Adm. in Topeka sets their own rules and they are not consistent.

10. I resigned because of: Profession disinterest, Personal indifference, Conflict in value of extensive education of SMH students vs. my high level of personal integrity, Cost of education of SMH students resulting in questionable student benefits and for achievement, Many consecutive years of teaching SMH students was wasted time.

11. At this time in the state of KS Sp. Ed. is not a secure field to be in. Positions and funding fluctuate from year to year. Job security--unless you're an "old times" (five years or more) is non-existent. You could find yourself without a job without warning. With this being a real possibility, who would want to get into this kind of a job in this day and age with the way the economy is. People need secure jobs that they can depend on. It also appears that when cutbacks in budgets appear, sp. ed. personnel are the first to go.

09. I resigned my service because of opportunities, benefits, and a lack of a professional attitude in general education. The school district health benefits were totally inadequate for my family. Salary advancement is inadequate as well. Any other company rewards service more than 3-4% increases in salary and decreases in benefit packages offered. Education in general would improve if attention was focused on quality in service and employee appreciation.

05. I wanted to stay in the education field but just need a break from the isolation of my room, contact with other types of students, and the lack of progress of my students. When I asked for an assignment change I was told you are a BD teacher and that is your job. I was given two options: stay or quit. I quit for myself. When a BD teacher says that they need a break that usually means they do and will go back. Instead they buck us up against a wall with no options but to walk away from what we desire to do.

03. I have no training in the BD area of Sp. Ed. Three of the BD students took up 90% of my time. I was very frustrated with behavior management, crisis intervention and stress involved with these students. I feel the student

who could have benefited from my expertise were sacrificed, because I was "learning" to "handle" the BD students.

04. I felt that I and my program were in the school because it was a state requirement. I and my students were second rate citizens. That we were to stay in our area and not to make waves.

15. After working with many urban students and feeling the frustration of not being able to solve the many problems that exist in their lives (family and educational), I decided to stay at home. As a teacher, I can see what enormous influences parents have on almost every aspect of their children's lives. When people go into the teaching profession, we all know it is not a good career as far as money is concerned. I have seen many excellent, intelligent and creative teachers spend the majority of their time in frustration because there are too many negative factors to overcome to achieve success. Most of the time our self-esteem suffers because success comes so hard and society seems to place little value on what we do--only blame. There are many negative factors in our jobs--poor salaries, poor or no facilities, too much paper work and duties other than teaching, too little time to make much difference, case loads that are way to big to be effective, etc. Teachers, by nature, are willing to stretch resources, work many extra hours, overlook shortcomings, and compromise, compromise, compromise. No wonder the products we're turning out are so mediocre. We just come to a point where we do the best we can and go on with the rest of our lives or we become so unbalanced psychologically that we can't function well in any aspect of our lives. I will say that special education teachers seem more sensitive to the needs of children than regular ed. teachers and are really trying to cater to individual differences and needs.

90. The case loads for speech-language pathologists in public education can be very overwhelming.

87. I did not feel that my director knew the stress that I was under. I was the only . . . for our cooperative.

86. It would be very helpful if Spec. Educational teachers were given the option of teaching regular ed (or whatever) periodically to relieve stress and burn out.

82. Increasing case loads until you are only supervising, and it's impossible to be accomplishing much else. In BD, you feel like your room is only considered a holding center for problem kids to get them out of the regular rooms and administrators don't care what happens to them or your stress level.

76. My case loads went from . . . to . . . children per week for a full-time position. In addition, we began medical billing for therapy with notes written weekly for each session for each child. I felt the administration was being deceptive to the therapists about the revenue generated, its uses, etc.

75. I loved my job as a 'self-contained' EMH teacher. When you seem to care and have success then they give you more children with more problems, as well as more paraprofessionals to coordinate.

73. The reasons I asked to be released from gifted to return to the regular classroom: 1) Lack of application of IEP to individual student needs--they were written for "downtown," not the students. 2) Health/safety issues. 3) The work load was overpowering. I mess very much teaching gifted students and would do it again if there were no IEPs to do.

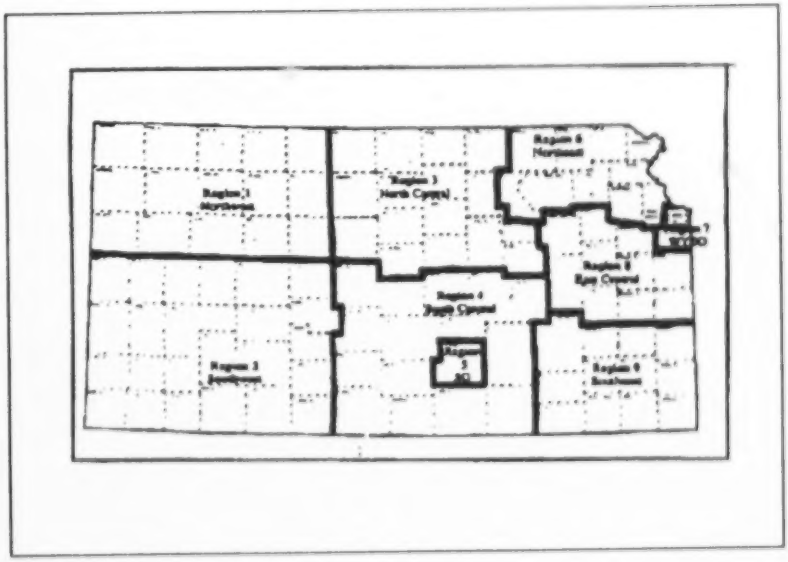
95. It was discouraging to have a Master's Degree in deaf education, and having important decisions being made by teams with very little "hands on" experience with the deaf. Most public schools are set up to help the hard of hearing, but few can handle adequately the profoundly deaf.

Appendix C

State of Kansas

Geographic Regions

(to accompany Table 8)



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Jones Institute for Educational Excellence
The Teachers College
Emporia State University
Emporia, KS 66801-5087

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